



(To return to tulsaworld.com, hit the back button at the top of this page.)

Poultry lawsuit ads pulled

By CURTIS KILLMAN World Staff Writer
9/26/2006

[View in Print \(PDF\) Format](#)

Ethics questions concern ads about AG, who is up for re-election

Poultry industry officials said Monday that they will temporarily halt advertisements that refer to Attorney General Drew Edmondson until after the Nov. 7 election.

The move comes after questions were raised last week as to whether the group that funded the advertising campaign should have registered with the state Ethics Commission.

A spokeswoman for the Poultry Community Council said the ads are legal but are being suspended to avoid the appearance of impropriety.

"Given the current discussion regarding the appropriateness of our advertising that references the attorney general, we have decided to ensure that there is no cause for speculation about our purpose," said Janet Wilkerson, who represents the Poultry Community Council.

Edmondson called the move "appropriate" and continued to question the legality of the ads.

"I think what they've been doing has certainly violated the spirit if not the letter of our ethics laws," he said.

The Poultry Community Council launched the newspaper, radio and television advertising campaign this summer.

The campaign, financed by the poultry industry, was designed to "shed light on Oklahoma Attorney General Drew Edmondson's continued distortion of the truth," according to poultry industry officials.

On behalf of the state, Edmondson filed a federal lawsuit in 2005 against 13 poultry companies regarding the use of poultry litter as a fertilizer on fields within the Illinois River watershed.

Edmondson claims that the litter, a combination of bedding material and poultry waste, pollutes the rivers, lakes and streams when excess amounts wash from the fields during rains.

Ads placed by the Poultry Community Council quote one poultry grower as saying the attorney general is "just plain wrong" when he accuses "farmers just like me of breaking the law when it comes to applying poultry litter as fertilizer to our lands."

Ethics Commission Executive Director Marilyn Hughes would not say last week whether she thought the ads violated any campaign expenditure laws.

However, the Arkansas Democrat-Gazette quoted Hughes as saying earlier that she thought the ads walk a "fine line" in following election laws.

Poultry industry officials say the ads convey to Oklahomans that the industry is concerned about "truthful dialogue, not political rhetoric."

"Even though we have violated no laws, we do not want discussion of such to overshadow the real message in our advertising, which is to educate the public about the poultry industry," Wilkerson said.

Edmondson, a Democrat, faces Republican James Dunn in the Nov. 7 general election.

Advertisements that do not mention the attorney general will continue to run through the election, Wilkerson said.

Curtis Killman 581-8471
curtis.killman@tulsaworld.com

The issues

The big issue: Attorney General Drew Edmondson alleges in a lawsuit that the poultry industry is responsible for pollution to eastern Oklahoma lakes and streams. The industry says it isn't.

The little issue: Poultry industry ads attack Edmondson and his lawsuit. That's a possible violation of state ethics laws because Edmondson is in the middle of a re-election contest.

The development: The poultry industry has pulled its ads that directly attack Edmondson.

[View in Print \(PDF\) Format](#)

 [Back](#)

Copyright © 2006, World Publishing Co. All rights reserved.